



Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Bill: House Bill 1528 - Maryland Council on Health in All Policies – Establishment
Sponsored by Delegate Robbyn Lewis

Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chairwoman

Position: FAVORABLE

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of the Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND) in SUPPORT of House Bill 1528. Representing more than 1,200 registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs), nutritionists, dietetic interns and students, MAND is the largest association of food and nutrition professionals in Maryland and is committed to improving health through food and nutrition across the lifecycle.

Every day we work with Marylanders in all walks of life — from prenatal through end of life — providing nutrition care services and conducting nutrition research. We provide care and utilize our nutrition expertise in hospital systems, private practice, academia, industry, community health care organizations, long term care and assisted living facilities, schools, etc.

The Health in All Policies (HiAP) workgroup was a collaborative approach to improve the health of all communities by incorporating health, sustainability, and equity in decisions across sectors and policy areas. Its goal was to ensure that decision-makers are informed about the health, investment, and sustainability consequences of various policy options during the policy development process.

The chronic illnesses epidemic, growing inequality and health inequities, are complicated and multi-causal problems that cannot be solved by a single entity. Promoting the health of communities and individuals requires that we address the root causes of these complex problems, which are the social determinants of health (SDoH). These include transportation, education, access to quality food, economic opportunities, safe communities, and more. To solve these problems, HiAP proposes to advance collaboration among the usually private government sectors. Therefore, the Maryland Council on HiAP is needed.

So how is HiAP different? A HiAP approach ensures that health, equity, and sustainability be routinely, consistently, and intentionally considered in policymaking by embedding health considerations early in the processes of planning and development of all programs and policies. Equity is the fair and just opportunity for everyone to be as healthy as possible. Sustainability refers to creating and maintaining conditions for future generations to enable them to maintain and achieve health equity.

Ignoring how policies affect health is costly. For example, the treatment of adults with obesity- related illnesses cost \$342 billion in 2013, an increase of 28.2% when compared with 2005. The causes of obesity are multiple and include access to quality, affordable, nutritious food, and access to recreation. Our community has an influence on behaviors. Many individual public agencies and policies can play a role in reducing the risk of developing obesity, which enforces the importance of including health considerations in all decision-making. (Health In All Policies, A Guide for Implementation, 2019).

As a registered dietitian, I sat on this committee for almost two years representing the Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND). Members of the committee of HiAP were from every sector of public health such as state, local agencies, non-profit, including transportation and housing and nutritional needs of communities, to name a few. I was honored to serve as a nutrition expert. We spent many hours laboring on how we can implement Health in all Policies in institutions as well as the general public. Without a doubt, we as public health practitioners wanted to stress the importance of health in all policies in all aspects of our lives and to create a state of well-being for underserved communities.

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics actively supports this bill and the great need of having a registered dietitian to emphasize that quality food is necessary to maintain and assure positive health outcomes. Therefore, the registered dietitians will be an asset to the council.

We ask the committee for a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 1528.

Sincerely,

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